

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 09921 01 OF 02 232131Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ICA-20 AF-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02
SS-15 IO-14 ACDA-12 /113 W
-----092746 232241Z /20
R 232108Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6736

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 09921

USICA

FOLL SENT USINFO, USICA, USNMR SHAPE, PARIS, LONDON,
& KINSHASA 22 MAY FROM BRUSSELS REPEATED YOU:

QUOTE
UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 09921

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USINFO FOR PGM/RC; PGM/PP; EU; STATE FOR EUR/NE;
ROOM 5141 AND EUR/RPM

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MOPS, CG, BE, FR
SUBJECT: BELGIAN MEDIA REACTION

1. QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DIFFERENCE IN APPROACH BY BELGIUM
AND FRANCE REGARDING THE SHABA OPERATION AND SOUL-SEARCHING
REGARDING BELGIUM'S RELATIONS WITH THE MOBUTU GOVERNMENT
DOMINATED BELGIAN MEDIA COMMENT MAY 22.

2. LA LIBRE BELGIQUE ASKS: "HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT IN
BRUSSELS THEY LACKED SO MUCH JUDGMENT AND CONSCIENCE THAT
IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO KEEP SECRET THE KOLWEZI OPERATION?
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PAGE 02 BRUSSE 09921 01 OF 02 232131Z

AT THE TIME OF THE PARATROOPERS' OPERATION IN STANLEYVILLE,
14 YEARS AGO, TOTAL SECRECY WAS MAINTAINED. THIS TIME,
THERE WAS TOO MUCH TALKING, AND BEFORE THE DECISION TO SEND
TROOPS, TOO MUCH BEATING ABOUT THE BUSH...SOME PEOPLE HAVE
GROWN ANGRY AT SEEING FRANCE PLAY THE LEADING ROLE IN THE
OPERATIONS TO RESCUE THE KOLWEZI HOSTAGES. IT IS PROBABLE,
HOWEVER, THAT WITHOUT THE FRENCH PARATROOPERS, THE BALANCE-

SHEET WOULD HAVE BEEN STILL MORE TRAGIC THAN IT WAS, EVEN THOUGH IT IS KNOWN THAT FRANCE HAS IN AFRICA SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT INTENTIONS THAN THOSE OF BELGIUM, IT CANNOT BE BLAMED FOR HAVING SPEEDED UP AN ACTION THAT HAD BECOME URGENT BECAUSE OF THE VERY HESITATIONS AND PROCRASTINATION IN BRUSSELS. WE DO NOT WANT TO ACCUSE ANYONE, BUT THE QUESTION IS CLEARLY ASKED: TO WHAT EXTENT HAVEN'T THE LEAKS AND THE QUASI-PUBLIC DEBATES THAT PRECEDED THE DECISION TO INTERVENE WORSENERED THE SITUATION IN KOLWEZI?... THERE ARE CERTAINLY MANY REASONS TO BLAME THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS POLICY WHICH AMOUNTS TO SYSTEMATIC ATTEMPT TO DESTROY THE AFRICAN EQUILIBRIUM, TO PREVENT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS EURAFRICA THAT WORRIES THEM. BUT, CONFRONTED WITH THIS POLICY, THE WEST IS PARALYZED BY ITS PETTY CONTRADICTIONS... IT SEEMS TO BE VERY CERTAIN TODAY THAT WITHOUT A FAST AND RESOLUTE CONCENTRATION BETWEEN ZAIRE AND THE COUNTRIES WHOSE HELP IT HAS REQUESTED, WITHOUT A COURAGEOUS AND REALISTIC PLAN, A GENERAL CATASTROPHY WILL NOT BE AVOIDED AND IT WILL NOT ONLY HIT ZAIRE AND ITS EUROPEAN PARTNERS, BUT THE WHOLE OF AFRICA. AND EVEN THE WHOLE WORLD. THE QUESTION IS NOT WHETHER ONE WILL HELP MOBUTU TO STAY IN POWER, BUT WHETHER ONE WANTS TO SAVE AFRICA AND EUROPE. FOR IT IS NOT A POLICY TO ORGANIZE LAUNCHINGS OF PARATROOPERS EVERY TIME SOMETHING GOES REALLY TOO WRONG."

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PAGE 03 BRUSSE 09921 01 OF 02 232131Z

3. LA WALLONIE WRITES THAT "IT WAS DANGEROUS, AND TO SAY THE LEAST, AMBIGUOUS THAT BELGIUM'S HUMANITARIANISM BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE OPERATION OF REPRESSION AND OF ENFORCING ORDER BY THE FRENCH PARATROOPERS. IT SEEMS THAT THIS VERY THREAT HAS BEEN THE OCCASION FOR DEPLORABLE MASSACRES."

4. LA NOUVELLE GAZETTE WRITES THAT "THEY DID NOT FAIL TO UNDERLINE IN BRUSSELS THAT THE FRENCH INTERVENTION GOES BEYOND THE HUMANITARIAN FIELD TO BRING UNEQUIVOCAL SUPPORT TO THE ZAIRIAN FORCES. WE THINK THAT, BY TRYING TO BE MORE NUANCED, THE BELGIAN POSITION RISKS COMING CLOSE TO HYPOCRISY. FOR WE ARE SUPPORTING PRESIDENT MOBUTU'S REGIME...LET US THEN BE CONSISTENT AND LET US NOT BE SPARING WHEN THE PROTECTION OF OUR FELLOW COUNTRYMEN WHO WORK THERE IS AT STAKE."

5. LE PEUPLE WRITES THAT "THE RESCUE OF OUR FELLOW COUNTRYMEN WAS IMPERATIVE WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY...IT IS PERFECTLY DISHONEST TO SPEAK OF BELGIAN INTERFERENCE IN A CONFLICT IN WHICH THE ZAIRIAN GOVERNMENT IS CONFRONTED BY AN OPPOSITION THAT WANTS TO TOPPLE IT MILITARILY.

THERE IS, IN THIS RESPECT A BASIC DIFFERENCE OF PRINCIPLE BETWEEN THE FRENCH POLICY AND OURS. FRANCE OBVIOUSLY WANTS TO PLAY A ROLE OF WESTERN 'LEADERSHIP' ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT. BELGIUM, FOR ONE WANTS TO CONFINE ITS ROLE TO DEVELOPMENT AID, TO WHICH IT IS COMMITTED AND IN WHICH SO MANY BELGIANS ARE INVOLVED...BUT IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE OTHER BELGIAN DEVELOPMENT WORKERS BE DEFINITELY PROTECTED AGAINST THOSE DRAMATIC EVENTS..."

6. MANU RUYS IN DE STANDAARD WRITES THAT "THE PROSPECTS FOR COOPERATION...ARE SOMBER. YET, ACTIVITY IN THE COPPER PROVINCE MUST BE RESTORED. IT IS THE ARTERY OF ZAIRE AND AN IMPORTANT AREA FOR THE WORLD ECONOMY. HOW AND UNDER WHOSE AUTHORITY CAN A NEW START BE MADE? THE KOLWEZI
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 BRUSSE 09921 01 OF 02 232131Z

TRAGEDY INDICATED THAT MBUMBA, THE LEADER OF THE KATANGES, DOES NOT SHRINK FROM CAUSING A MASSACRE AMONG THE WHITES. THE REPUTATION OF RACISM ACCOMPANYING HIM THUS SEEMS TO BE CORRECT. HE IS NOT AN APPEALING ALTERNATIVE TO

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 09921 02 OF 02 232207Z
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ICA-20 IO-14 ACDA-12 /113 W

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UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 BRUSSELS 09921

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THE PRESENT REGIME. BUT CAN MOBUTU CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN HIMSELF FOLLOWING THIS NEW EXPRESSION OF POWERLESSNESS? HE SEEMS TO BE NO LONGER EFFECTIVE AT ALL. AN INTERNAL AFRICAN MILITARY FORCE WILL PERHAPS BE ESTABLISHED TO GUARD

THE STRATEGIC COPPER AREA." RUYS CONTINUES THAT "FOR BELGIUM IT WILL BE IMPORTANT TO REAPPRAISE THE ENTIRE CO-OPERATION WITH ZAIRE" BUT CONCLUDES: "THE SITUATION, HOWEVER, IS EVOLVING VERY RAPIDLY. IS IT STILL SO CERTAIN THAT TOMORROW, IN A ZAIRE WHERE THE FRENCH AND THE AMERICANS EXERCISE MILITARY AUTHORITY AND DETERMINE ECONOMIC POLICY, OUR BELGIAN ENGINEERS, BUSINESSMEN AND DEVELOPMENT WORKERS WILL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO PLAY THEIR LEADING ROLE? PRESIDENT MOBUTU AND BELGIAN PRESENCE IN ZAIRE ARE PERHAPS THE GREAT LOSERS IN THIS SHABA TRAGEDY."

7. HUGO CAMPS IN HET BELANG VAN LIMBURG, DENOUNCING CHAOTIC ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN ZAIRE, WRITES: "THE MAIN CULPRIT OF THE SHABA BLOODBATH IS AND REMAINS MOBUTU. HENCE OUR SHOCK AFTER THE GROTESQUE STATEMENT OF MINISTER SIMONET WHO SAID YESTERDAY, EVEN BEFORE THE DEAD PEOPLE OF KOLWEZI ARE BURIED, THAT BELGIUM WILL HAVE TO PROVIDE EVEN MORE ASSISTANCE TO ZAIRE...IN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN BELGIUM AND ZAIRE THE SHABA WOUND CANNOT BE CLOSED

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PAGE 02 BRUSSE 09921 02 OF 02 232207Z

ANYMORE WITH ECONOMIC AND DIPLOMATIC WORDS OF WISDOM. THE BELGIAN PEOPLE IS COMPLETELY FED UP WITH THE FRUITLESS FAVORS ENJOYED BY A SHADOWY ZAIRESE PRESIDENT. OUR GOVERNMENT CAN NO LONGER REFER TO A POST COLONIAL FEELING OF GUILT TO MAINTAIN ITS ZAIRESE SANTA CLAUS POLICY. THE QUESTION OF GUILT IS REVERSED: MOBUTU OWES US DOZENS OF HUMAN LIVES." KORENGOLD UNQUOTE DE TARR

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, INVASIONS, COMBAT OPERATIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BRUSSE09921
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780217-1029
Format: TEL
From: BRUSSELS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780531/aaaaaznt.tel
Line Count: 202
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 1fa20799-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2609768
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BELGIAN MEDIA REACTION
TAGS: MOPS, SOPN, CG, BE, FR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/1fa20799-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014